2: Kroeber E-5 (1930)1931 NU31 Seri NU31

789 Some shamans display their ability to hold live coals in their mouth.

Taboos

[88] 784 At first menstruation, the girl eats nothing (!) for 8 days, only drinking water. For 4 nights a *fiesta* is held for her, men and women dancing in a circle, anti-sunwise. She is outside the ring. Her head is not covered. San-pit roasting was unknown to the informant.

[841] At menstruation a woman drinks hot water. She may cook for others. She may not eat deer meat.

[844] After childbirth, both husband and wife eat only *atole* (gruel) and water, he for 4, she for 8 days. She may not work at all, he only a little, such as getting wood, "hunting" as necessary, etc.

[861] [224] There is no puberty ceremony for boys. Nothing is said to be known of any rule forbidding a boy to eat of the first game killed by him.

[833] Continence before hunting deer was not observed. Nor was there any special treatment or respect due the deer carcass. It is said that deer meat could not be left behind unless there was too much, but this is probably a statement of practise rather than a taboo.

Dances

535 [787] Besides the girl's puberty dance, the Seri also had a scalp dance. Only the frontal piece of the scalp was used. This was hung on a pole. Men (armed) and women danced together around it. If the scalp fell down, all would die.

Dances seen were solo on a plank laid over a shallow pit. Several singers sat by, beating or rattling anything convenient. Each song and dance lasted scarcely three minutes. The tempo is fast. The step is a quick double shuffle with alternate feet. In one type, the dancer held to a stick with one hand, his body and hanging arm remaining as motionless as possible. Another type was without the stick, the dancer holding a gourd rattle and keeping his body bent forward somewhat.

534 171 Rattles are of gourds, e'Xēc, on a stick, or of cocoons, Xekakē'ntta. Deer-hoof rattles were denied. The cocoons are on a band worn below the knee. The Yaqui-Mayo wear such knee-bands of cocoons; and sometimes of deer-hoofs. The Gila Pima also know the cocoon band.

Various Religious Items

276 Datura (toloache, jimsonweed) does not appear to have been used. Even the plant seems unknown, although it is said to occur in the Seri range.

778 789 Rain making seems to be by amulet rather than by direct shamanistic power. For instance, Antonio Herrera wears a small object

12: Moser L-5 (no date) 1964
(ca. 1960) NU31 Seri NU31

SERI BLUE

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ABSTRACT

The blue which the Seri Indians of Sonora, Mexico, use in face painting is not the mineral dumortierite, as previously believed, but is a prepared pigment. This paper is a description of the process in which three elements are combined to produce this pigment.

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McGee and Kroeber reported the mineral dumortierite as the source of the blue pigment used in Seri face painting (McGee 1898: 165-6; Kroeber 1931: 27). Coolidge described two blues, one a mixture of gypsum and a boiled root, the other a blue stone found on Tiburon Island (Coolidge 1939: 200). Xavier mentioned dumortierite and commercial bluing. She also referred to a third blue obtained from a plant on Tiburon (Xavier 1946). Present investigation has shown that as far as the Seri know, the only blues they have ever used are *ika?óil* "to cause to be blue" (commercial bluing) and the highly prized *?antezj kóil* "blue clay" of their own manufacture.[1]

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The components and the method of manufacture of *?antezj kóil* are said to have been taught to the women long ago by *?ant i?akímxoj* "they who tell the things about the earth." The actual color transformation is veiled in mystery to the Seri who say that if the process of making the clay is observed by any girl who has not passed the menarche, the blue will not appear. Its appearance is not attributed to shaman power, however.

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?antezj kóil has been in less demand during the last few decades since commercial bluing has been readily available. Nevertheless, *?antezj kóil* is the blue preferred by those women who continue to adorn their faces in the traditional manner.

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The three ingredients used in making the blue clay are the root bark of *xkoktz (Franseria dumosa)*, *iki kóizj* "to grind with" (a mixed clay in which montmorillonitic layers predominate), and *mokni óoxW* "excrement (sap) of *mókni (Guaiacum coulteri)*." The Seri say that the *iki kóizj* and the *mókni* are found only on Tiburon Island. The root bark of *tinkl (Franseria ambrosioides* Cav.) or of *xneejan siiktoj (Stegnospermum halimifoliam)* can be used instead of *xkoktz*. *tinkl* gives a distinct aroma to the clay. The plants mentioned are fairly common along the Sonoran coast.*

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*EDITOR'S NOTE: It is interesting to note that none of the ingredients is blue in its unaltered state.

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NOTES

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1. The phonetic values of the symbols used are the following: t is voiceless dental stop; k is vl. velar stop; ? is glottal stop; W is vl. labial grooved-rounded spirant; s is vl. alveolar spirant; z is vl. alveo-palatal spirant; l is vl. lateral spirant; j is vl. velar spirant; x is vl. back velar spirant; m is labial nasal; n is dental nasal; i is a high close front vowel; e is a low close front vowel; a is a low open central vowel; o is a mid close back vowel.

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2. The restriction as stated to me by various women pertains only to young girls below the age of menarche. Actually, however, none of the above-mentioned young men and women, most of them in their twenties, was allowed to observe.

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3. Plant specimens are deposited in the Herbarium of The University of Arizona.

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4. The blue "pencil" which McGee describes (McGee 1898: 166) and pictures (McGee 1898: Plate XXVII facing p. 170) is apparently the *?antezj kóil*.

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